DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 231 192 FL 013 736

TITLE English Teaching Profile: Colombia.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English Language and Literature Div.
PUB DATE Feb 83
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Policy; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Instructional Materials; *Language Role; Modern Language Curriculum; *Second Language Instruction; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Colombia

ABSTRACT

This profile of the English language teaching situation in Colombia discusses the role of English in the educational system and in Colombian society. The status of English as the country's first foreign language is examined. It is noted that because Spanish is sufficient for most needs and because there is a relatively small number of Colombians who are proficient in English, it is not accorded great priority in educational systems. The new English syllabus released in 1979 is described, and the use of English in the educational system from secondary school through the university level is examined. Also discussed are (1) the status of teacher training; (2) materials support; (3) the development of the educational system and its current objectives; (4) English outside the education system, especially commercially offered courses; (5) British and American support services; (6) commercial opportunities for books and audio materials; and (7) current research. A concluding general statement notes that English is recognized as an indispensable tool for business and advanced studies, and that attention to learners needs, a new curriculum, and the need for better teacher education are being considered. A bibliography is included. (AMH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED231192

THE BRITISH COUNCIL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DIVISION

ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
The British Council
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Country: COLOMBIA **Date: February 1983**

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

English is the first foreign language in Colombia though the range of its uses is limited. This is in part due to the pre-eminent use of Spanish, which suffices for most needs, and in part to the relatively small number of Colombians who both need English and have sufficient command to use it with confidence. Those who do so are for the most part professionals, eg academics or businessmen who have either had part of their education in bilingual environments or have needed to learn English to pursue their occupations.

In Colombian universities English is used as a means of access to written texts. In business its main use is for dealing with clients from a range of countries, notably the United States, Canada, Europe and Japan.

The proximity of Colombia to the States, and the fact that the States offer academic, business and holiday opportunities, mean that the locally spoken form of English within the main urban centres is predominantly an American-influenced variety. A weaker influence on the local form is British English, which reflects the extent of interchange between Britain and Colombia. There is no particular social cachet attached to speaking either variety. (The native inhabitants of the San Andros islands are an exception to the general picture; they speak an English-based, Spanish influenced, Creole.)

English is the medium of instruction in some subjects in a handful of bilingual schools. One or two of these give particular emphasis to English at primary level though there is no official government syllabus.

At the tertiary level English is hardly ever used as a medium of instruction. Most universities, though, run compulsory service English courses where the emphasis is entirely upon the acquisition of reading skills. University departments of modern languages offer English as a main course subject for future teachers of languages.

Books written in English, whether literary or otherwise, are not easy to obtain. Only a small section of the educated community is likely to read such books for pleasure. Local authors do not write in English, but specialist periodicals make reference to English books.

While the importance of English is generally accepted, it is not accorded the kind of priority which makes it easy for educational authorities to secure increased funds to develop programmes. English, formerly the only foreign language taught in most schools, now has to share a place with French in the curriculum.

FL013736

© The British Council. London 1983

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the permission of the British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN, United Kingdom.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In June 1979 a Presidential decree made the following provision for foreign language teaching in secondary schools: English is now a compulsory subject during the first two years of the six-year cycle and, along with French, optional for the next two. In the last two years French is compulsory.

Although this is the legal requirement, the teaching of French can only be implemented in those schools where there are teachers. Such teachers are in short supply and a number of schools have applied to the Ministry of Education for dispensation from the decree. Provision for French is therefore variable.

In September 1980 the Curriculum Section of the Ministry of Education produced a new syllabus for English which covers the six-year secondary cycle and gives prominence to reading skills. This syllabus will only take effect when teachers are acquainted with its objectives and when materials which exemplify the new approaches are available on the market.

With only a three-hour weekly provision for English, the syllabus does not extend to any introduction to literature.

All examinations at the secondary level are internal - the school is given permission by the Ministry of Education to award its own certificate of secondary education (Bachillerato), but the moderating has to be done by another school. This does not prevent certain private bilingual schools from taking other examinations in addition, so each year there is a small entry for GCE and the Cambridge examinations. A newcomer to the scene is the International Baccalaureate which is taken at the Colegio Colombo Britanico, Cali and Anglo-Colombiano in Bogotá. Next year it will be taken at the English School in Bogotá too.

Promotion from one year to another within the secondary cycle is by passing examinations in all subjects.

The level of knowledge of English of a school leaver depends on the type of school he has attended. In bilingual schools it would not be untypical for his level to be equivalent to that of the Cambridge First Certificate. In other schools the level will be appreciably lower.

Choice of textbooks is left to individual schools, and often to individual teachers. As a result children can use six different textbooks in six years. The situation is different in the San Andros islands. There, English is taught in primary schools and the Ministry of Education has recently been giving a lot of attention to providing primary textbooks in English for other subjects too. At the secondary level, however, they follow the same courses as the mainland.

There is an Inspectorate of Languages at the Ministry of Education which makes periodic visits to schools. Their powers appear to be minimal, and their interests administrative rather than pedagogic.

Pre-service teacher-training is carried out by those universities that have a department of modern languages. Those that do, offer a four-year programme which includes the study of French and Spanish. The emphasis in these courses is more upon theory than practice.

Literature is a common but small component in them and tends to be introductory to writings by American authors and, to a lesser extent, British. The concentration in this teaching is upon background and explication of the text. At undergraduate level work on stylistics does not take place.

In-service teacher training is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and short two-week courses are offered once or twice a year in most parts of the country. These may take place at universities, the Centro-Colombo Americanos, or the CEPS (Centros Experimentales Pilotos).

ASOCOPI (the Colombian Association of Teachers of English) runs sporadic seminars for English teachers in different parts of the country. Previously the courses took place with little central direction, but with the appointment, in October 1981, of a KELT officer as English Adviser a more uniform and planned pattern is emerging.

ASOCOPI is the only professional association for teachers of English and amongst its members are teachers from both the secondary and university levels. It is organised on a regional basis but with a national board which is re-elected once a year at the National Congress. It has the potential to be an effective association and is so from time to time, depending on the energy of local representatives. It produces a quarterly journal HOW which has received a grant from the Hornby Trust over the last two years to enable it to improve its production quality. This journal has proved attractive to British and American publishers as a medum for advertising ELT materials. The British Council supports both ASOCOPI and HOW in a variety of ways.

Most universities have service English departments, which are usually sections within their departments of modern languages. Their function is to provide compulsory courses that concentrate almost wholly upon reading strategies work. There are two patterns: the first, wide-angle ESP - that at the Universidad de Los Andes is typical - teaches a common core course of English for academic purposes which is followed by students of all disciplines. The second, narrow-angle ESP, teaches a narrower band of language and vocabulary related to a particular subject; eg English for dentistry or English for anthropology.

The Instituto Electronico de Idiomas in Bogotá, officially run by the Ministry of Education, provides part-time courses in spoken English for adults, with preference given to government employees. Otherwise adults wishing to learn English must do so at private institutions, Colombian or non-Colombian.

From time to time radio stations make use of BBC programmes and more recently the series The Missing Jewel and Modern Office Ltd have been transmitted. The high cost of BBC ETV materials has dissuaded Inravision from purchasing them although the authorities are well disposed towards BBC productions. The British Council recently made a presentation of the series Follow Me to the Ministry of Education for use in in-service teacher training. The series On We Go is in use at Colegio Cafam, Bogota, a private educational establishment which is always interested in curricular innovation and modern methods of teaching and learning.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Almost all the teachers of English at the secondary level are Colombians. Estimates of their number vary betwen 5000 and 6000. Probably half have a degree in languages, but an estimated 90% are incapable of expressing themselves simply in English. However, there are shining exceptions to this and a small number of secondary schools in both public and private sectors have well-organised English departments with well-qualified staff.

The recognised professional qualification for a teacher is the Bachelor's degree in languages, but many teach in schools without it. About twenty universities claim to prepare teachers and provide courses with some pedagogic content.

At the tertiary level just a few universities have an American or British member of staff within the English department; many others would like to have at least one native speaker. Most British teachers are either in Colombia on a short-term contract or are married to Colombians. The British staff at the three bilingual schools with British connections are in Colombia on the same basis.

The British Council collaborates with various Colombian universities in holding seminars with specific objectives in such areas as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and ELT methodology. These seminars are aimed mostly at teachers of English at tertiary level and at teacher trainers, although teachers at the secondary level are not excluded. Within the last three years British visitors to such seminars have included Professor J M Sinclair, Professor H G Widdowson, Dick Allwright and Chris Kennedy.

Where cost is involved, the great majority of Colombian secondary school teachers have difficulty in attending seminars and vacation courses. Only a small number of those working in universities can afford the very high costs of attendance at conferences and courses outside the country.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

At the secondary level the current provision of materials is influenced by the new syllabus and by the speed with which publishers can produce new texts. The newest general courses have been published by Voluntad - Conquest-a dynamic approach to English by three Colombian authors - and by Educar Editores - Express it in English, also by Colombians. Other publishers are working on the production of similar materials.

Among British publishers, Longman New York has concluded an agreement with Carvajal to import their series In-Touch and has an agreement with Educar Editores to import other titles. Other texts for the same level, and more generally available, include New Concept English and Target, both Longman productions, and New Horizons in English from Addison Wesley.

Apart from the adapted Longman material referred to above and the series Look, Listen and Learn, suitable British texts for the secondary level are not available in any quantity locally, and delivery delays from the UK by sea are often as long as six months.

Oxford University Press has an agreement with Carvajal to import the series Reading and Thinking in English, which was written at the University de Los Andes and is in use at a number of Colombian universities. Other texts for English for Specific Purposes (ESP), eg the Nucleus Series, are in short supply.

In the face of such shortages, and in response to course needs, many universities rely upon materials produced by their staff on a duplicated or photocopied basis.

One or two bookshops take an interest in British ELT materials, notably Librería Bibliotecnica and Librería Nacional, but for reasons of policy or finance are not normally prepared to carry a stock of the most commonly used texts. Nelson has recently concluded an agreement with Librería Bibliotecnica, where there is now a stock of Nelson ELT titles. Individual orders are accepted but the final price can well be 100% above the UK listed price.

English literature is available in translation, particularly the works of American writers. In Bogotá there is only one bookshop that stocks English publications exclusively, Librería Aldina. Here there is a good stock of British fiction in paperback though prices are high. ELT materials are not stocked.

There is a potential market for video cassettes and cassettes which supplement general courses. Within the business sector there is a willingness to buy materials if they are available.

Council films on ELT methodology are used widely by the English Language Officer and are loaned frequently.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

For detailed background information see the Colombia Education Profile, July 1979, British Council, London.

See the diagram below, 'Estructura Orgánica Capacitación Inglés'.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

For an outline of the development of the education system and its current objectives see the Colombia Education Profile referred to above. The two areas currently receiving renewed attention are curricular reform and teacher-training.

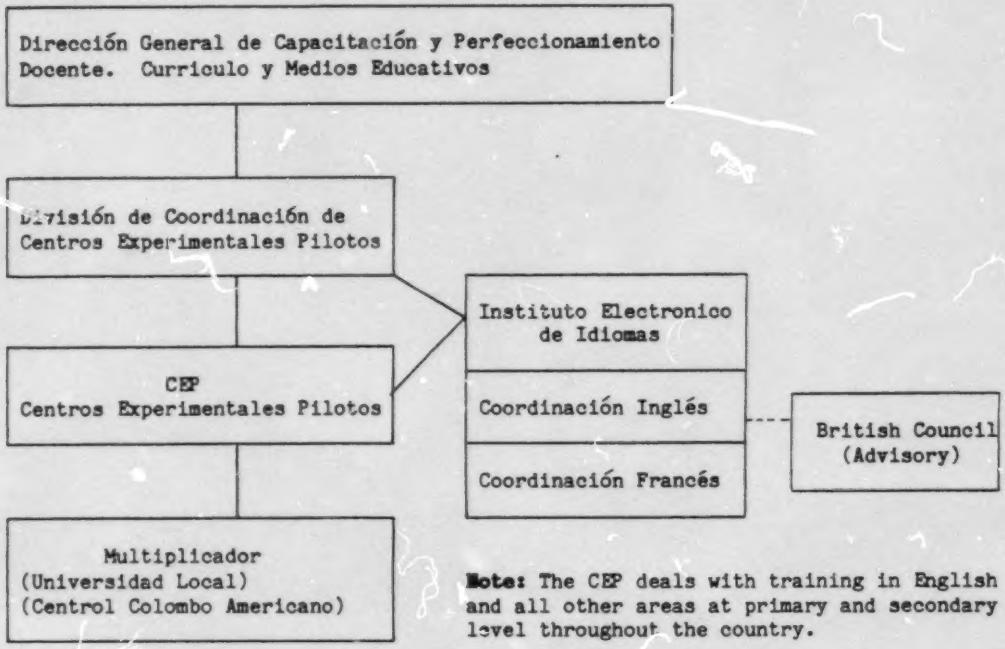
The new English syllabus for the secondary level was issued in October 1981. Its concentration upon the acquisition of reading skills is a reflection of what the Government feels secondary students need and what can be reasonably achieved, given teacher language competence and teacher training provision.

Such provision is drawn from two main sources: from the universities for pre-service training and from the Ministry of Education for in-service training.

Each Colombian university is autonomous although permission for the running of courses must be obtained from ICFES (Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior). This means that the provision for pre-service training is highly varied within the structure of an eight semester course, though in nearly all cases there is a much stronger emphasis upon the theoretical components of training than upon the practical.

ESTRUCTURA ORGANICA CAPACITACION INGLES

MINISTERIO DE EDUCACION NACIONAL - COLOMBIA


Dirección General de Capacitación y Perfeccionamiento Docente. Curriculo y Medios Educativos
División de Coordinación de Centros Experimentales Pilotos
CEP Centros Experimentales Pilotos
Multiplicador (Universidad Local) (Centrol Colombo Americano)
Instituto Electronico de Idiomas
Coordinación Inglés
Coordinación Francés
British Council (Advisory)

Note: The CEP deals with training in English and all other areas at primary and secondary level throughout the country.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, the Instituto Electronico de Idiomas initiates and coordinates all plans for in-service work. Its policy is to work with and through all institutions that can contribute to and mount courses: the universities, the Centro Pilotos Experimentales, the Centro Colombo Americano and the British Council. To date almost all courses have been concerned with providing basic competence in the language, rather than methodological insights. However, with the introduction of the new syllabus which lays stress on reading strategies, there is an urgent need to orientate teachers to the new approaches.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

In Bogota numerous commercial institutions offer English to adults. The provision is English for general purposes, mainly at beginner and intermediate levels. Teachers, mostly without an EFL qualification, come from varied backgrounds: some are Colombians, some native-speakers. Some institutions offer their own short introductory teacher-training courses. Notable amongst such institutions are the Winston Salem School and the Meyer Institute. No organization has a British parent body.

In the main cities elsewhere in the country, similar types of institution operate.

The Ministry of Education has dependent language institutes in major cities. In Bogota, the Instituto Electronico de Idiomas offers a range of English courses and gives particular preference to Government employees.

Colegio Cafam, a private school in Bogotá operating primarily for the benefit of employees who are members of 'Cafam', offers evening courses to adults, which use BBC ETV materials including On We Go.

A few universities, mainly private and under pressure to raise revenue from extra curricular activities, are running English courses for professionals. Eight public universities run extension courses in English.

There are four notable private schools which place very considerable emphasis upon English in the curriculum. They are:

Colegio Anglo Colombiano)
The English School) in Bogotá
Colegio Nueva Granada)

Colegio Colombo Británico in Cali

They all offer English from primary level, and at secondary level some subjects are taught in the medium of English. With the exception of the Colegio Nueva Granada, they prepare students for the Cambridge examinations, both the First Certificate in English and the Certificate of Proficiency.

The same three schools also prepare students for the International Baccalaureate with, amongst the subjects offered, English literature for which there is both a written and oral examination.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Council-employed and Council-sponsored ELT staff:

English Langage Officer, Bogotá - C H M Taylor, followed by Gail Liesching;

Key English Language Teaching Scheme (KELT) Adviser in Service English (P B King) to Colombian universities based at Universidad del Valle, Cali since February 1979;

KELT Adviser to the Ministry of Education based at the Instituto Electronico de Idiomas, Bogotá - John Wood.

British teachers of English are employed at the Colegio Anglo Colombiano, the English School and St George's School in Bogotá and the Colegio Colombo Británico in Cali. A few other institutions employ British teachers from time to time.

With the move to new premises in Bogotá in February 1981 the British Council resumed direct teaching after a period of twenty years. All the staff are British; they consist of a Director of Studies and six other teachers of English, all recruited locally.

Student numbers average 350 and there are plans to increase this number to 500 or so within the near future.

English for general purposes is offered within a course entitled English for International Communication. Special purpose courses are also provided and have included English in Business and Management, English for Study Purposes, English for Cambridge Examinations and Keep Up Your English. There are video play-back facilities and BBC materials in use.

A new special purpose course is planned in the area of English literature.

In Cali the KELT ESP Adviser is concerned with testing, evaluation, the production of materials and informal teacher-training. His main involvements in Bogota are with the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional and the Universidad Javeriana. At the former he is working on an ESP team-teaching project to provide reading materials for microbiology. At the Universidad Javeriana he is devising and running a low cost, distance education type of in-service ESP teacher training project which is concerned in its first stages with reading comprehension and teaching strategies. In other cities he gives occasional talks and seminars to university staff.

The KELT Adviser to the Ministry of Education has as his main duty the planning of systems for in-service teacher-training courses, and liaison with Colombian universities providing pre-service training. The current focus of attention is on introducing and orientating teachers to the new secondary syllabus.

The first ESP conference in Latin America was held at Paipa in 1977. Since then there have been smaller conferences/seminars in Colombia run by Professor John Sinclair, Professor Henry Widdowson, Dick Allwright and Chris Kennedy. They have dealt with discourse analysis, preparation for teaching ESP, classroom management and testing.

British teaching materials in use include:

Reading and Thinking in English	OUP
The Nucleus Series	Longman
Kernel One, Intermediate and Plus	Longman
Streamline English	OUP
Cambridge Certificate English	Nelson

BBC ETV Series:

On We Go	at Colegio Cafam
Follow Me	at Ministry of Education
People You Meet	at the British Council
Songs Alive	at the British Council

British Council films:

Activity Days in Language Learning
Pair and Group Work in a Language Programme
Communication Games

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The Americans have two Centros Colombo-Americanos in Bogotá catering for roughly 5000 adult students, as well as eight centres throughout the country. The Bogotá Centre has 50% American and native-speaker staff. All the others have at least one American staff member. The remainder are Colombians.

The Director of the Bogotá Centre is an employee of USICA; other staff are hired locally or from the States. The main twelve-stage course is concerned with general English and the four skills. There are other courses, including one to train bilingual secretaries.

Recently the Centros Colombos have been collaborating with the Ministry of Education by providing in-service teacher-training courses around the country.

Relations between the Americans and British in ELT are close. Informal discussions are held from time to time to explore ways of collaborating.

The Fulbright Commission offers a small number of postgraduate awards for Colombians to obtain a Master's degree in TEFL in the States. Occasionally Americans are appointed under the Fulbright scheme to work in ELT in Colombia.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

There are no agencies operating in Colombia other than the British Council and Centro Colombo Americano.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Colombian institutions and professional people working in ELT welcome British services, information and experience. Initial enthusiasm is usually high. It falls off when it becomes apparent that bureaucratic and financial problems may make it difficult to follow up requests.

Colombian teachers and students would buy British books if they were readily available at a price they could afford. Mark-ups of between 100% and 150% on UK prices are not uncommon and these put many books beyond their financial reach. With the exception of one bookshop in Bogotá, Librería Bibliotecnica, no bookshop carries a stock of ELT titles and it is generally known that British books are difficult to obtain. British publishers interested in the Colombian market must be prepared to spend time finding ways of distributing and promoting their books. A recent agreement reached between a British publisher and Colombian distributor/publisher indicates that the difficulties are not insuperable.

Cassettes are even more difficult to obtain than books and yet there are indications that Colombian adult learners would welcome the possibility of obtaining them.

Betamax is used far more widely than in the UK and there is a potential market for British videocassettes produced for Betamax NTSC.

There is a constant demand for the University of Cambridge qualifications at First Certificate and Proficiency levels. At the June sitting there are over 100 candidates and in December about thirty. These numbers are likely to increase as the examinations become more widely known.

There has been little demand to date for British consultancy services but the recent work that the Council carried out for Telecom may stimulate further requests.

A regular stream of Colombians go to certain ARELS schools both for long and short (summer) courses. These schools have usually negotiated special agreements with airlines, notably British Caledonian and Avianca, who are keen to promote this side of their business.

In the case of teacher training the Council in Bogotá ran the first ever Royal Society of Arts Preparatory Certificate course in Latin America, in 1982. It attracted interest from both native speaker teachers resident in Colombia and Colombian teachers. Another training course run by a language institute called Interlingua Ltd suggests that there may be a continuing interest and demand for short part-time courses.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

There are no writers' associations nor literary societies concerned with British writing or writers.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

The Universidad del Valle, Cali, offers a Master's degree programme in linguistics and Spanish which includes courses in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, linguistics and literature. This University also has an active programme of research and applied language study, and a number of the Language Department staff have had attachments to the Department of English at the University of Birmingham to work on translation problems, literary discourse and a computer data base project for ESP. Discussion of a more formal link between the two Universities is currently in progress.

The Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá has a research programme related to evaluation of the materials Reading and Thinking in English and to the development of ancillary materials.

Research work is not common in Colombian universities generally - the impediments are the lack of resources for research and highly trained workers.

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Further detailed information about elements of this Profile can be obtained from:

The English Language Officer
El Consejo Británico
Apartado Aereo 4682
Bogotá
Colombia

Useful publications reflecting current professional concerns are:

HOW the journal of ASOCOPI obtainable from:

The Director
Apartado Aereo 460
Armenia
Quindio
Colombia

and

ESPUVALLE obtainable from:

Departmento de Idiomas
Universidad del Valle
Apartado Aereo 2188
Cali
Colombia

12

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

Although French has a place in the curriculum at the secondary level and is taught at universities, English is recognised nationwide as an indispensable tool for business, commerce and advanced studies, whether in Colombia or overseas.

Learning needs have been better identified within the last few years and special purpose teaching at universities is well focused. It is carried out in some institutions with efficiency and sophistication.

The new 'Programa de Inglés' for the secondary schools also reflects realistic thinking about what can and should be achieved by Colombian students. However, it is unfortunate that only three hours per week has been allocated to it.

There is a growing realisation that effective teacher-training, both pre- and in-service, is the key to improved standards of teaching and learning. However, pre-service provision is too highly theoretical, and fundamental re-thinking must be applied to what can realistically be achieved in Colombian circumstances. In-service provision has to be systematised and planned in a phased way. Universities, in particular, have a crucial role to play in all areas of teacher-training. There is a willingness to explore this role but no concensus as yet on objectives or on ways of realising them.